

Home affairs

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SWISS BUSINESS VENTURES IN GREAT BRITAIN.

In order to make the "*Swiss Observer*" as attractive as possible to all classes of our readers, we are perfectly willing and even anxious to publish descriptive accounts of individual or collective business ventures of members of our Colony. For several excellent reasons we think we are justified in devoting a part of our columns to this kind of information.

Firstly and foremost, we believe that our supporters will be interested to hear of the business activities of their compatriots in this country, almost as much as they are interested in our reports of the social events of the Colony or in the home news.

Secondly, it should be of value to them in so far as they might wish to patronise the business of our compatriots if only they knew or remembered where they are to be found. Conversely, of course, we are aware that in some cases our accounts may be helpful to the owners of the businesses described and we sincerely hope they will be.

Naturally we can indulge in this kind of publicity only under conditions of strictest impartiality and fairness to all. Those are absolutely guaranteed. In the first place we offer to report on the business of every Swiss in Great Britain, without distinction, who cares to give us particulars, to permit a trusted representative of the "*Swiss Observer*" to inspect their factories, etc., and whom we deem to be doing honour to the high traditions of quality, craftsmanship and integrity of our home country. In the second place we wish to make it clear that the accounts we intend to publish will, of course, not be influenced in the slightest degree by the advertising side of the "*Swiss Observer*."

By strict adherence to these conditions, which are really a matter of course, we think that we can render a real service to our readers as well as to the business community of our Colony. As we have stated before, we believe that the members of our Colony could assist Swiss imports into Great Britain and visa versa once the cumbersome restrictions are lifted, as well as Swiss enterprise in this country, very considerably by persistently patronising such enterprise.

If our reports prove to be helpful in this sense, the "*Swiss Observer*" will be able to show another justification for its existence.

We should be glad if all Swiss businessmen in this country would help us, to get together a really comprehensive series of reports on their various ventures.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, October 30th, 1953. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donation over and above their subscription: A. W. Burkhard, J. Brunner, B. Frick, C. Genoud, Dr. V. Umbricht, M. A. Maud-Modica, Ch. Strubin, J. Keller, J. H. Speich, H. Monney, Swiss Club, Manchester.

HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

"Democracy demands good morals".

At the opening of the Autumn Sessions of the Federal Chambers, an incident occurred which deserves to be mentioned because it allows us to make some observations regarding our electoral régime and the functioning of our democracy.

But, first of all, let us recall briefly the manner in which the system of proportional representation is conceived in Switzerland. The citizen votes for a Party. But, at the same time he votes for individual persons. He is at liberty to choose from among the various candidates proposed by a Party Committee. He can strike out the name of one or the other. He also has the right of cumulating — that is to say of inscribing it twice — the name of the candidate whom he favours and whose election he desires particularly. Thus, our electoral régime is a mixed one, in the sense that although it is based on an equitable repartition of seats between the small and the big Parties, it also permits of the expression of personal preferences. This has been arranged in order that the Party Committees should not become all-powerful, and that the personal element — which constitutes the chief advantage of a majoritary system — should be maintained, nevertheless.

It is always the candidate who has obtained the greatest number of personal suffrages, who is elected. Should he give up his functions, for instance, by resigning, then his place is taken by the candidate who came immediately after him in the order of preference. This is quite normal and it does away with the necessity for complementary elections. In other words, after a general election has taken place, we not only have members who have been elected primarily, but also a reserve of substitutes.

An event has occurred, however, in Basle, which although doubtless quite legal from the point of view of strict law, but which, nevertheless, is profoundly shocking and has been criticised very sharply. The Communist deputy in Basle, the only one of his kind, was obliged to resign in consequence of a penal sentence. Normally — as we have just explained — it is the first of the "next comers" from the 1951 elections, who should have taken his place. But, this man waived his right, then all the other candidates

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who took part in the 1951 elections, did likewise. They put forward excuses of various kinds, professional or private in order to declare that it was impossible for them to assume the mandate of a deputy. After this, in conformity with the Law, it was the Party Committee — the same one, which in 1951 drew up the list of candidates — which designated the new deputy. It is quite clear that all this business of waiving the rights to be appointed deputy was produced artificially, because the Committee of the Communist Party wanted to send to Parliament, in Berne, a man who was not a candidate in 1951.

The result of all this, is a result which the Law wished to exclude. It shows itself in a decision taken by the Committee, whereas the authors of the electoral Law wanted the appointment to depend exclusively from the will of the electors, a will which was freely expressed. And that is the scandal which is causing no little noise in our republic. With his good, sound common sense, the man in the street thinks that the result of the elections has been falsified when a Party Committee abuses the possibilities offered by the Law, in order to impose, when it is too late, a man of its own choice.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to prevent such manoeuvres. A candidate can always waive his claim, just as an elected deputy can always resign. What is so shocking, is this series of renunciations. It is not considered admissible in our country that people should make abuse of the Law and not respect its spirit. This is a case, in respect of which it may be said once more that direct democracy is only viable if its rules are applied in good faith and if they are made use of, in accordance with the commandments of good political moral customs. A democracy without any morals, is no longer a democracy.

"Switzerland and Nuclear Power"

During this holiday period, the activities of the Swiss Government are greatly reduced. It has happened, even, that at certain moments, there has only been one Federal Councillor in Berne, so that his colleagues have had to return to the Capital in all haste, when it was necessary for a decision to be taken, as in the case of the recent fleeting riots which were organised by some apricot growers in the Valais.

However, there is a feeling about, that the end of the holiday season is approaching. For one thing,

the Federal Council has just published a Draft Bill, accompanied by a Message, which are both very interesting. There will no doubt be a great deal of talk about them during the next few months, for this affair — after it has weathered the parliamentary storms — will be submitted to the sovereign people. The matter in question is that of the establishment, on Genevese territory of a European Centre for Nuclear Research. Most of the countries of Western Europe are interested in this matter. This institution has the UNESCO for patron. Subject to the decision of Parliament and of the people, the Federal Council esteems that Switzerland should also take part in it. It was without hesitation that the Federal Council, for its part, concluded that our country should even go further and, thus, it offered the hospitality of our soil for these laboratories.

This attitude on the part of our Government has not always been understood. First of all, as could only be expected, opposition was shown by the Communists. They alleged that this institute would serve military purposes and that it would only be an instrument in the hands of the Western anti-Soviet coalition. This propaganda has not remained entirely without effect, and there are to be found a certain number of good citizens, anxious for the welfare of their country, who consider that the establishment of this centre for nuclear research on our territory, might compromise our neutrality.

It is, however, quite obvious that this institution will not have any military character and will serve exclusively for the purpose of scientific research. The science of the atom is developing at an increasingly rapid rate. Numerous scientists are engaged in work on it, and their efforts will never cease. The results may prove of the greatest benefit to humanity, for this is not a matter of some gratuitous conquest. On the contrary, this research may lead to practical applications of a perfectly peaceful nature. Because it might be used for some contestable or even criminal purpose, is no reason for stopping the progress of science. And this is true not only in regard to atomic science, but of every science, whatever it might be.

In this particular case, we are in possession of the most serious guarantees that the future institute in Geneva, will be used, exclusively, for pure scientific research. The most valuable of these guarantees resides in the fact that the results of all the work undertaken must be published — this is obligatory —

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and in this way it will be available, automatically, to all the countries of the world. Thus, there will be nothing secret about it, as there will be nothing to hide.

The simple truth is, that individually, every European country possesses far too limited means to be able to promote research work in this domain. They, therefore run the risk of being surpassed in the scientific and technical field by the great American and Soviet powers. So, they have united their efforts. In this way they show their autonomy. This is a fine manifestation of the European spirit. Switzerland owed it to herself to become an associate. No doubt that our people will understand this, as the people of Geneva have already done, when they rejected the Communist initiative condemning this institute.

"The Swiss Confederation and Tourism"

As everyone knows, the Federal authorities are seeking, more than ever and with far more zeal than formerly, possibilities for the realisation of important economies. This has to be done, in spite of practices which have grown into habits — not only in the administrations, but also among the beneficiaries of State subsidies — for it is quite evident that the Swiss people will not easily accept financial projects which only admit of taxation and not of economies. The pressure of public opinion, in this respect, is undeniable and it would be foolish not to pay any attention to it.

In its search for possibilities of economising, the

Federal Council draws inspiration from a principle which everyone is anxious to approve. It affirms that there are a great many expenses which might be assumed by private economy, and that certain professional corporations which are extremely prosperous at the present time, could easily, through their own efforts, get together those funds which are so liberally distributed to them by the State. Two very characteristic examples are given, in this respect. Here they are.

An important subsidy is granted each year by the Confederation to the Swiss Office for Commercial Expansion, an institution which carries out all the propaganda abroad for "boosting" the products of our industry. Officially it is stated that our exporters are doing such good business that it is not necessary for them to ask for two or three million francs from the Confederation, each year, for propaganda purposes outside our frontiers.

The second example put forward, concerns the Swiss Tourist Office, which draws half its resources — amounting to several millions — from the Federal Treasury. In this regard also, official sources affirm that those circles which are interested in tourist traffic could, in their turn, relieve the State, by collecting the necessary sums for propaganda purposes.

All this is absolutely logical and the reasoning is well-founded. Nevertheless, it would seem as if one were somewhat inclined to forget the origin of these two Offices, from which it is suggested that their traditional subsidies be withdrawn. They came into being, both of them, at a time when our exports were facing great difficulties and when the Swiss hotel industry was going through a period of great depression, as a result of the lack of foreign visitors. At that time, the Confederation intervened not so much in order to come to the help of this or that victim of the slump, but in order to safeguard general interests.

It is an indubitable fact that without exportation on a very large scale, Switzerland would be ruined materially. Our country is poor by its very nature. It owes its prosperity to hard work and nothing else. It is, therefore, in the interest of the country as a whole, of all the trades and professions, of all the various strata of society, that our propaganda abroad should be well organised and should dispose of large means.

Nor could Switzerland — most certainly — do without her tourist industry. Our exports are always smaller than our imports. In order to equilibrate our trade balance, we require the product of tourism and of other invisible exports, such as banking and insurance activities. It is therefore consistent with the general interest that the tourist movement should be maintained and developed. Once more it must be stressed that this is a matter which affects, not the interests of any particular group of the community, but of everyone, of the entire population, of the whole economy of the country.

From this point of view — which will no doubt be accepted ultimately — the two subsidies which are now being contested, are justifiable. In granting them, the Confederation remains within the framework of its natural tasks. The same cannot be said in regard to certain other subsidies of an economic nature, of which we shall speak on another occasion and which have as their purpose the artificial maintenance of activities which are not longer justifiable.



Lindt

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